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WEEKLY REPORT

THE SITUATION IN THE CONGO

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Situation in the Congo

(Information as of 1700 EDT 27 April)

SUMMARY

The civil war drags on, with no Appomattox in sight. Egypt now claims it has stopped providing material aid to the rebels. The Congo Government is engulfed in personality and jurisdictional disputes. General Mobutu and the Belgians are suspicious of Colonel Hoare, who is peevish and threatening to quit. Kasavubu is concerned that Tshombé is after the presidency, and probably he is right.

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1. Military Situation

Skirmishing continues in the northeast. On 22 April, a government column was ambushed south of Paulis, and suffered eight casualties. Five days later, Congolese rebels--apparently based in the Sudan--attacked the mercenary-held frontier post of Aba.

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Neither the ambush below Paulis nor the harassment of Aba seem to point to a resurgence of rebel morale, however. On 22 April, some 300 rebels turned themselves in at Faradje, 30 miles west of Aba.

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Stanleyville came under rebel attack on 24 April, for the first time in over a month. The insurgents, about 150 strong, were easily repelled, but government troops have been put on alert. Apparently the rebels were hoping to disrupt the elections now being held in the city.

The Fizi salient is relatively quiet. No attacks have been reported on Uvira for over two weeks, and Albertville is still unmolested. American officials who visited the city last week believe it can be held with only minor additions to its garrison. They recommended, however, that aircraft be stationed there to keep the rebels north of the city occupied until larger ground forces can be committed. How soon the commitment will be made is subject to dispute.

Colonel Hoare wants to move his South Africans to Albertville in May, but both General Mobutu and

the Belgians are reluctant to let him do so. The Belgians, who have always been suspicious of the colonel, apparently believe he is in cahoots with Congolese Interior Minister Munongo, and that the two have designs on Katanga. Mobutu is professionally jealous.

Hoare is annoyed at them both. On 22 April, in fact, he submitted his resignation to Tshombé. It remains to be seen, however, whether the resignation will be accepted, or whether Hoare will be sweet-talked by Tshombé into staying on. Hoare, whom the US army attaché in Leopoldville thinks is something of a prima donna, has often threatened to quit, but has never followed through so far.

2. The Rebels and Their Sympathizers

According to press and radio reports another rebel "unity" conference was held in Cairo last week and a 20-member "supreme council of revolution," was set up. Gaston Soumialot, Egide Bocheley-Davidson, General Olenga, and Thomas Kanza were all in town, and seem to have been named to the council; Gbenye apparently was not there. The history of such rebel "councils" and "governments" suggest that it has virtually no chance of bringing unity to the quarreling dissidents.

Although Egypt apparently permits rebels to meet on its soil--and probably pays their hotel bills--it now claims to have stopped sending them arms. The truth of its claim cannot be ascertained. No Egyptian arms shipments to the rebels have been detected since 7 April.

Ghana may have made an abortive attempt to deliver arms last week. One of its air force planes, heading for Khartoum, was impounded in Chad on 24 April. Although it is not known for the moment whether the plane was loaded with weapons--the possibility exists that it was on a training flight

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3. Internal Affairs

As the national elections have progressed and Tshombé has demonstrated a wide vote-getting capacity, the long unspoken political struggle between the veteran but lethargic President Kasavubu and the mercurial Katangan leader has come out into the open. The basic issue is whether Tshombé will make a bid for the presidency, or allow Kasavubu to have another term without opposition in elections next fall. Under the constitution approved last August, the office of the presidency is the locus of power.

Kasavubu would obviously like to continue as president. It seems doubtful, however, that Tshombé, particularly as he measures his growing domestic political strength, will be willing to remain in the premiership under Kasavubu, who could fire Tshombé if he saw fit. Moreover, Tshombé has visions of himself as a major African leader, perhaps with the presidency serving as a base.

Until recently, it seemed that Kasavubu and Tshombé would work out a deal in which Tshombé would support Kasavubu for the presidency in return for Kasavubu's handing over to Tshombé the powers of the office. The chances for such a deal now seem less than ever. Tshombé, backed by the mercenaries, is in a more powerful position than Kasavubu, whose own power base seems to be deteriorating. Kasavubu has suffered political reverses in his Bakongo tribal stronghold of Kongo Central; the progressive wing of the province's ABAKO party has won out against Kasavubu's traditionalist wing, and has indicated a willingness to work with Tshombé.

Colonel Van der Walle, the top Belgian military adviser, recently told the US Embassy that a dispute was brewing between Kasavubu and Tshombé over the timing for dissolution of the present government. Tshombé insists that it remain in office until presidential elections next fall, whereas Kasavubu says a new government should be installed immediately after the end of the current parliamentary elections, legally over on 30 April. Kasavubu apparently is threatening to appoint a new premier in order to wrest from Tshombé a promise not to run for president.

Although supporters of former premier Adoula--the so-called "Binza" group--have been trying to work on Kasavubu's fears and induce him to name another premier, this seems unlikely for the moment. Should Kasavubu attempt to replace him, Tshombé probably would mount a coup. He has already brought into Leopoldville a small mercenary group and a band of Katangan gendarmes, possibly for such a contingency.

4. The Abidjan Group's Congo Initiative

The five moderate French-speaking West African states, which are pushing for Leopoldville's admission to the 14-member African and Malagasy Common Organization (OCAM) as a preliminary to making military and administrative assistance available to Tshombé, have almost completed their round of consultations in selected African capitals. In all, six separate high-level missions were sent to 15 African states, including all other OCAM states except Dahomey, whose premier came to Abidjan. One of the missions visited radical Guinea and Mali while others went to English-speaking Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, to Leopoldville itself, and to Ethiopia, seat of the Organization of African Unity. Preliminary indications are that, in addition to the five sponsoring states, the plan has found general favor in three other OCAM countries--Gabon, Chad, and the Malagasy Republic--but that Congo (Brazzaville) is, as expected, strongly opposed and Mauritania and Cameroon essentially so. The attitudes of the remaining three OCAM states--Dahomey, Central African Republic, and Rwanda--are uncertain at this time, but vigorous support is unlikely from any of them.

A further powwow among the sponsoring five and perhaps others will probably be held shortly to consider the results of these consultations and future action. Togolese President Grunitsky had indicated earlier that further approaches to the US and other Western countries for financial and material support could be anticipated following such a meeting. However, President Senghor of Senegal, who supports the plan, was sufficiently discouraged by the negative reactions--especially that of

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Mauritania, whose president is the current head of OCAM--to propose a two-week "cooling off" period to be followed by a special meeting of OCAM presidents. Unless at least Mauritania and Cameroon can be brought around to accepting the Congo as a member of OCAM it is difficult to see how that first step in the Abidjan group's "peace plan" can be achieved.

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the five-nation Abidjan group has been in touch with Leopoldville several times since February and that Tshombé is probably interested in membership in OCAM as a means of demonstrating the acceptability of his government in Africa. He even expressed, in a conversation with the US chargé on 22 April, a readiness to receive troops from OCAM states. Tshombé left the impression, however, that any actual agreement on such troops remained to be worked out sometime in the future and would depend on their ability and willingness to take over the mercenaries' combat role. The Abidjan plan envisages the employment of OCAM troops only as garrison forces in pacified areas with the Congo troops thus "released" taking over from the mercenaries--an unrealistic idea in view of the extreme unreliability, both politically and militarily, of these Congo Army elements.

5. The Belgian Role

The Belgian-US-Congolese logistics group in Leopoldville, which is to seek enforcement of priorities in military expenditures in the Congo, appears to be taking shape. Chiefs of Belgian and US military missions are participating along with General Mobutu. Tshombé's Belgian military adviser Van der Walle--backed by Spaak and the Belgian military--insists that the group must start off with simple procedures and organization and is resisting efforts to prescribe for all contingencies.

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